



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Digital Agenda: Commission opens public consultation on preservation of the open internet (net neutrality)

The European Commission is today launching a public consultation seeking answers to questions on transparency, switching and certain aspects of internet traffic management, with a view to its commitment to preserve the open and neutral character of the Internet.

These questions have emerged as key issues in the "net neutrality" debate that has taken place in Europe over the past years, including the [recent findings](#) of the Body of European Regulators of European Communications (BEREC).

Input is sought from all interested public and private parties, including fixed and mobile internet service providers, Internet content and application providers (including comparison websites), equipment manufacturers, transit providers, investors, public authorities, consumers and their associations. The responses to this consultation will be crucial input for the Commission's planned recommendations announced by European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes on 29 May 2012 (see [MEMO 12/389](#))

Neelie Kroes said: *"Today there is a lack of effective consumer choice when it comes to internet offers. I will use this consultation to help prepare recommendations that will generate more real choices and end the net neutrality waiting game in Europe. Input from this consultation will help turn BEREC's findings into practical recommendations."*

In particular the Commission seeks views on:

- internet traffic management, including congestion management, managed services and privacy issues;
- transparency, in particular regarding the actual internet performance (speed and quality) and restrictions of internet access products;
- the possibility for consumers to switch operators and
- internet interconnection issues between network operators.

The consultation document and additional information are available at: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/actions/oit-consultation/index_en.htm

Responses to the public consultation should be sent before 15 October 2012.

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Background

In November 2009, the EU electronic communications framework was revised. The new rules include the objective that subscribers should be able to access and distribute information or run applications and services of their choice. At the same time, the Commission set out in its [Declaration on Net Neutrality](#) its commitment to preserve the open and neutral character of the internet.

Following a more general public consultation ([IP/10/860](#)), the Commission published a Communication on the open internet and net neutrality in Europe in April 2011. At the same time the Commission asked the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) to undertake a fact-finding exercise on issues crucial to ensuring an open and neutral internet, including barriers to changing operators, blocking or throttling of internet traffic and transparency and quality of service.

On 29 May 2012 BEREC published the results of its traffic management investigation, which showed that several fixed and mobile network and service operators apply certain usage restrictions (blocking or slowing down of certain services) affecting a significant number of subscribers in Europe.

As the previous consultation was of a more general nature, this consultation will focus specifically on transparency, switching and certain aspects of traffic management in order to provide input for future guidance that the Commission intends to publish in 2013.

For more information

[Digital Agenda website](#)

Neelie Kroes' [website](#)

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